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🕮 *Easter Island: The Endless Enigma*

by José Luis Velasco; photographs by Juan Pablo Lira and underwater photography by Paul Humann. Editorial Kactus, Santiago de Chile. 96 pages, color photographs. ISBN 956.7013-28-3. English translation by Peter Kendall.

Review by Dan Gartner, Canberra, Australia

I received this book as a Christmas present from a good Chilean friend who knows about my interest in Rapa Nui (thank you, Javier Thumm!). The book is published in Spanish, English, French and German; my copy is the English version. I was informed that the book in available in the USA but, for some reason, not in Australia. I was told that the price runs around US $40, a bit on the high side.

This book is not, nor does it try to be, scientific. It gives a complete but abbreviated view of Easter Island and is divided into sections with short text. The photographs are excellent. In fact, there are no less than 139 pictures in the book, plus five more on the dust jacket. There is no question that the young Chilean photographer, Juan Pablo Lira, knows the island and his profession quite well. The underwater photographs (by American photographer Paul Humann) are also first class.

The sections of the book go from arrival to the island through its history, geography, people, archaeology and way of life, and finishes with "the allure of Easter Island." The text is well written and kept to a minimum. Clearly, the photographs are more important. It apparently was written to attract tourists, particularly those who know nothing about Rapa Nui. In many cases, the reader may have no idea what the author is talking about: disconcertingly, there is no clue as to where in the world the island is located. We just land there onto "the most isolated island in the world" but no other information.

The quality is also first class: binding and general layout are excellent. The English translation is very good. However, the book is marred by many typos. It is a pity that proof reading was so poor. It is irritating to find words like "biefly" (p.47), "utiliarian" (p.50), "navegators" (two or three times), and so on. There are no fewer than 17 such typos in addition to an important one; the area of the Atlantic Ocean (p.30) is wrong by a factor of 100.

What is missing is a good map of the island and a general map to show where Easter Island is located. There is no detailed index nor bibliography although credit is given to sources in the introduction. The book was written with the scientific consultancy of Patricia Vargas Casanova.

Easter Island: The Endless Enigma is for those who wish a general introduction to the island, perhaps with a view to visiting the island.

🕮 *Fa'a-Samoa: The Samoan Way. . . between conch shell and disco. A portrait of Western Samoa at the end of the twentieth century*

by Ad Linkels, 1995. Photos by Ad and Lucia Linkels. Published by Mundo Etnico Foundation, Tilburg, The Netherlands. ISBN 90-72840-09-7. This booklet accompanies the CD *Fa'a-Samoa: The Samoan Way. . .* [PAN 2066 CD: Anthology of Pacific Music #6]

Review by Daniel Pouesi

Ad Linkel's information for his *Fa'a-Samoa: The Samoan Way* is drawn from joint fieldwork in 1982. It is a "portrait of a short but important period" in Samoa—the 1980s, a "transitional" period characterized by the "rigid traditions" of Samoa on the one hand and "democracy and individual freedom" of the West on the other. It was a time, according to the author, that Samoa underwent major changes—changes that are "reflected in the music and dances of that time."

Fa'a-Samoa is a readable book with historical information on Samoa and lots of great photographs. Part II, *Music and Dance*, is highly recommended reading for anyone interested in the musical instruments and implements. Unfortunately the rest of the book is beset by a number of precarious conclusions. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that the author has set for himself a formidable task: an analysis of Samoan music and dance, the changes they underwent and how they reflected Samoa of the '80s. Given the complexity of Samoan culture, it is doubtful that such a task can be successfully accomplished in a 94-page, mostly-pictorial, book.

In contrast to Richard Moyle's *The Music of Samoa*, *Fa'a-Samoa* is impressionistic. Many of the author's statements are overly simplistic and hence, misleading. On page 6, for instance, he writes of American Samoa: "[Its] import economy is completely supported by the USA. As a result, the Samoans do not have much of a say anymore in their own country." American Samoa is an unincorporated territory of the United States but it is not under the jurisdiction of the US Constitution. It elects its own government officials (a 1960 constitution gave legislative powers to the *fono*) and, to date, still maintains it traditional *matai* system and land tenure. It might be argued that the main reason for American Samoa's economic woes is one of "too much say."

Of the Samoan concept of "beauty," the author notes: "A slim person is not held in great respect. A *matai* who wishes to be respected should have a large belly." Although the Samoan concept of *Maluali'i* (imposing or large-bodied) suggests a "stateliness" or "dignity", it is not a necessary condition for respectability. Many of Samoa's respectable *matai* (past and present) are slim by both Samoan and Western standards. Lauati Namulauulu, a leading orator from

Published by Kahualike, 1996

Safotulafai whose picture appears in many books on Samoa, is a good example. The author also makes the assertion that "fat is a Samoan virtue as it indicates prosperity" and that "boys prefer plump girls." These statements are far too simplistic. The Samoan word from plump is "*veveni*" and is usually used in connection with a baby, as in "*E veveni alafau o le pepe*" [The baby has plump cheeks]. In this case, it suggests "cuteness" and the only instance I know of in which "plump" comes close to "beautiful." When used in connection with one's body, it means "bloated or puffed up with disease" (*Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 1911). The Samoan word for "fat" is "*puta*" or "*putagaele*" [obese] both of which are pejorative. The author's statement is just as stereotypical as is the one most of us in the US are familiar with that all Samoans are fat. One need only look at photos of old Samoa (and indeed the author's own) to see that the majority of Samoans are slim and well-proportioned.

Moving on to page 11, we read: "Having a tattoo proves you are a man!" It is true that, in the past, before a man took a *matai* title, it was necessary for him to get a tattoo (Peter Buck, *Samoan Material Culture* 1930) and that he could neither prepare food nor perform certain tasks for the chief's council without one. But statements such as this trivialize this very important Samoan ritual. Were it a test of manhood, how then would one explain the woman's *malu* [tattoo]? Or the Samoan tradition that the *tatau* was originally intended for women? Or the fact that young men were often tattooed alongside the *manaia* [high chief's son] to share his pain? Or that some actually served as "canvasses" upon whom an apprentice practiced his craft?

On page 17, Linkels makes the bold statement that "Samoans take pleasure in belonging to a group and delight in conforming." Were this the case, why then should there be a "continuing clash between the old traditional culture and elements of the imported Western culture?" The latter statement nullifies the former and contradicts other writers' observations on how easily the Samoans had adopted Western culture traits into the *fa'a-Samoa*.

Regarding the *Fa'ataupati* [the so-called slap-dance], the author writes that it is "also known as the mosquito dance because the performers sometimes look as if they are trying to catch mosquitoes." This is the sort of thing one might read in a travel brochure or hear from an entertainer humoring an audience at a Polynesian *luau*. It bears a superficial resemblance to real life. As far as religious songs go, the author draws a very unlikely conclusion that they "are not only sung in churches. Even during a *fiafia*, part of the repertoire may be religious." It is true that Samoans make a reference to God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit in songs composed specifically for and performed during a *fiafia* but Samoans, in general, do not consider these songs "religious" and would never include them in a church repertoire. An example of such a song is the popular *O Iesu ole Vine Moni* [Jesus is the True Vine]. Although the lyrics sound "religious," Samoans still consider this song as "secular" and use it exclusively in *fiafia,* for which it was composed. A hymn may be sung as part of a religious "prelude" to a *fiafia*, but never in the *fiafia* itself.

Fa'a-Samoa concludes with the claim that "the *siva* Samoa. . . [is] a legitimate emotional outlet for individual frustrations. That is why this dance had always been so important for the general welfare of the population." The *siva*, the author contends, not only enables "people to confirm to the socio-political system, but also to express hidden emotions and frustrations" and in support of this, he quotes Margaret Mead as saying that the *siva* compensates "for repression of personality in other spheres of life." Not only is this statement naive functionalism, it is untestable and again, far too simplistic. I've never been to a *siva* attended by frustrated Samoans and to say that it serves as an outlet for repressed emotions is just plain silly. It presupposes, among other things, the notion that Samoans bring with them to a dance their hidden frustrations. In fact, a frustrated individual might very well express his or her demeanor in the behavior called *musu* —the same behavior the author describes on page 18: "A person in this state becomes surly, reckless, dejected and is completely unwilling to do anything that is requested of him. He resents attempts to cheer him up and even resents being spoken to"—hardly a description for a participant at a dance.

Most of my problems with *Fa'a-Samoa* are minor. But my few major complaints prevent me from recommending it as a primer for an introductory course in cultural anthropology or musicology although the copyright page suggests that this is what the publisher had in mind. *Fa'a-Samoa* would have benefited from a review by anthropologists who had done extensive research in Samoa. The bibliography includes Margaret Mead (as any book on Samoa would) and lists anthropologists Derek Freeman, Lowell Holmes, and Bradd Shore. However, not one of these three appears in the acknowledgment nor do we see names of Samoa's prominent musicians or composers known throughout the islands for their knowledge of and contributions to Samoan music and dance. The author does acknowledge, among others, a Samoan minister, a former teacher's wife and a Bible student, but the absence of individuals I would consider "key informants" leads me to believe that *Fa'a-Samoa* suffers from a lack of relevant insights. It is a nice book to have if one can overlook the generalizations and concentrate instead on the historical narrative, the section on musical instruments and beautiful black and white photographs. For the serious reader, I recommend waiting for a revised edition.

Daniel Pouesi, publisher of Le Pasefika, is Samoan. His KIN Publications specialize in Pacific Island children's books and non-fiction by Pacific Islanders.

https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/rnj/vol10/iss2/8

📖 *Kaho'olawe: Nā Leo o Kanaloa* (Chants and stories of Kaho'olawe). 1995.
'Ai Pōhaku Press, PO Box 37095, Honolulu, HI 96837. Oversize, 116 pages, the book comes in both hardcover and softcover versions. Softcover price: $32.95.
Foreword by Noa Emmett Aluli of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana; Introduction by Rowland B. Reeve.

Review by Georgia Lee

Kaho'olawe: Nā Leo o Kanaloa is essentially a picture book accompanied by Hawaiian *mele* (chants) and *mo'olelo* (legends) that are filled with allusions and *kaona* (hidden meanings). Throughout the book these are presented in both Hawaiian and English and comprise most of the text. The photographs, 38 in color and 39 black and white, are excellent.

Today Kaho'olawe Island is bare, windswept and desolate the result of years of over-exploitation. It was ravaged by herds of wild goats in early historic times, and then became a target for the US Military which did its best to blow it up. The island is still off limits for all but a few, so this book represents an opportunity to see its stark beauty through the lens of some talented photographers. In 1994, the federal government returned control of the island to the Hawaiian people; it is being held in trust by the State of Hawai'i while the job of clearing the island of unexploded ordinance continues. The island is to become a natural and cultural preserve, and likely will never be opened up to the general public.

I have been one of the fortunate few to visit Kaho'olawe as a member of an archaeological field project and allowed to join the 'Ohana campsite at Hakioāwa, a memorable and meaningful experience. With that in mind, I found *Kaho'olawe: Nā Leo o Kanaloa* to be a lovely ramble down memory lane. But this book is not for everyone; those who know and love Hawai'i and things Hawaiian will enjoy it. It is long on impressions and images but short on actual information and history. That is to be the subject of a second book, to be published as a companion volume. We await that with anticipation.

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Published by Kahualike, 1996